

apartheid years.

Not all of the artists are household names, but that could change, according to Narissa Ramdhani, CEO of the Section 21 company. She believes that, once Ifa Lethu gets into full swing, the names of artists in the collection will become as familiar as that of the late Gerard Sekoto, whose works sell for R300000 and more on art auctions in Paris, where he went into exile in 1948.

Already, the nucleus of Ifa Lethu's collection is gaining some renown, featuring as it does works by Fikile Magadla (who used his own blood to paint scenes of Sharpeville. He died of diabetes two years ago); Gerard Bhengu (whose township scenes predate Sekoto's); Ezekiel Madiba (whose sculpture of a female form carved from a railway sleeper is Johnstone's first collected piece); and Azaria Mbatha (a graduate of the Lutheran art school at Rorke's Drift and the first black South African artist to win the prestigious Cambridge Shirt Award. Mbatha was also the first black African artist to have his work accepted at the Museum of Modern Art collection in New York.)

According to earlier reports, Haigh and Johnstone have contributed 47 artworks.

Ramdhani says that the foundation also seeks to act as a patron for this exiled art, returning it to South Africa for exhibition. Ifa Lethu's board of directors includes heavyweights such as Mamphela Ramphele as chairman, musician Hugh Masekela, businesswoman Bridgette Radebe, former newspaper editor Raymond Louw and lawyer Michael Judin.

Would-be patrons are invited to join the foundation by contributing "packages" ranging from R100000 a year for three years to R1-million a year for three years.

The art that they will repatriate "will inspire a new generation", according to Haigh, who overlapped with Johnstone at the Australian embassy in 1974, a time when, he says, the "atmosphere was poisonous" in Pretoria.

Haigh says he believes that post-apartheid South Africa has correctly identified poverty alleviation as a priority, but says such "material goals" are not sufficient, and in danger of ignoring the bravery of artists who took enormous risks in defying apartheid.

Haigh, who is highly critical of Australia's policy towards South Africa in the '70s, makes a comparison to Aborigine art. This, too, was ignored in its own country, until French and German collectors came to buy. Only now does Australia recognise the aesthetic merit of its own people's artwork, something that Haigh believes will happen here, too, if Ifa Lethu is given a chance.

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